

## Different Perceptions of the Elderly Women's Clothing Image Traits

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*Significance of Research.* Elderly women's clothing styles have changed significantly in the United States. As demographic trends shift towards a longevity life style, there is an increased visibility of elderly models in the fashion industry. Unlike preconceived views of young people's, elderly women have shown changes in attitude toward fashion. In a pseudo-cohort analysis of family expenditures (Twigg & Majima, 2014), baby boomers entering sixties have been observed and demonstrate their steady acceleration of shopping frequency for clothing. The focus of fashion industry marketers has increasingly been the older population. Interest in fashion for the elderly is frequently displayed through blogs of inspiring street style for every day senior citizens in the society (Cohen, 2016; Phelan, 2012). However, elderly's clothing fashion is found to be distinguished from other age groups, raising the following research questions: Do elderly and young women perceive the distinctive elderly's clothing styles as trend or tradition in the aging society? Do elderly and young women have any different perceptions of the clothing image traits? Thus, this study was designed to investigate if elderly and young women have different perceptions of current elderly clothing fashion and their clothing image traits.

*Methodology.* A total of 100 females participated in a survey evaluating elderly women's clothing designs in current fashion for the elderly. They were divided into two age groups: ages 21~35 and ages 65~72. For the questionnaires, a total of 13 images of elderly women's clothing, considering complexity of design elements, were selected from fashion blogs entities of the elderly women's clothing fashion. The groups of elderly and young women evaluated the image traits of each elderly's clothing design using Likert in five scales. For the evaluation of image traits, 14 adjectives from previous image scale research (Kobayashi, 1990; Jung & Shin, 2010) were used: *elegant, natural, romantic, casual, dynamic, gorgeous, classic, dandy, formal, modern, chic, clear, traditional, and trendy*. For data analysis, a factor analysis with principal component method was used to define identifiable factors from the elderly clothing image traits. Factor scores were used for a hierarchical cluster analysis in order to identify the similarity of image traits. Then, the hypothesis was tested with t-test in 95 % confidence level of significance (H: there would be significant different perceptions of the clothing image traits between the elderly and young women). In addition, their responses of each clothing image trait were plotted on a graph, comparing their perceptions of the each clothing image traits.

*Findings.* When the image traits (=variables) were analyzed with a factor analysis, the elderly clothing images were explained with the main three factors: Trend, Tradition, and Casual in cumulative coefficient of determination 66.2%. The trend factor was explained with image traits: *trendy, dynamic, chic, modern, gorgeous, romantic, dandy and elegant*. The tradition factor was explained with traits: *traditional, classic, natural, clear, and formal*. The casual factor

was indifferent by the two age groups. However, image traits were slightly different by the age groups. According to t-test, elderly and young women displayed different responses to the elderly women's clothing ( $p > 0.05$ ). Although tradition factor included only 7.7% disagreement of the *traditional* image trait ( $t = -2.1239$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), elderly and young women observed 46.15% of the clothing pictures in *formal* image traits differently. In the trend factor, elderly and young women had different perception of the image traits: *clear, gorgeous, elegant, romantic, chic, modern, dandy, and dynamic*. The trend factor included 23% disagreement of the clothing pictures in trendy image traits ( $t = -2.1927$ ,  $t = -2.18626$ ,  $t = -2.8626$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

When each group's average scores of each image trait were plotted in a graph, young women showed higher scores of the trendy image trait for fitted outfits with a short skirts P5 and P8 (see figure 1). However, elderly women did not consider the fitted outfits as trendy. Elderly women categorized as dynamic images with a bright color as trendy clothing while young women viewed chic image traits with a fitted silhouette as trendy clothing. Both elderly and young women had a similar view of the traditional as an opposite trait to the trendy. When the score in *trendy* image trait was higher, the score in *traditional* image trait was low (see figure 2). However, young women answered with overall low scores of any elderly women's clothing images. This might be associated with their preconception of aging and clothing.

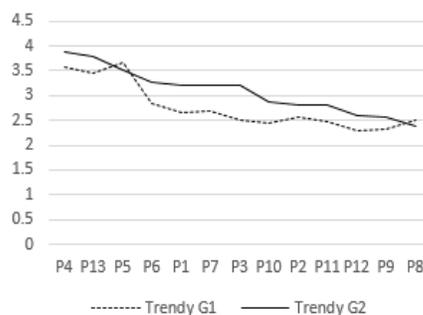


Figure 1. Trendy image trait evaluated by the young group (G1) and the elderly group

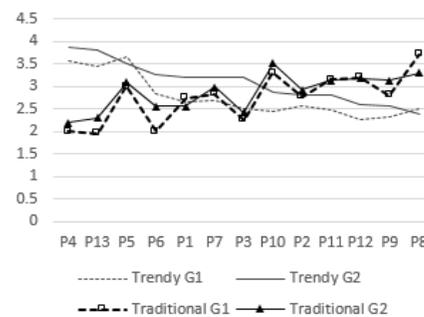


Figure 2. Trendy and traditional image traits evaluated by the young group (G1) and the elderly group (G2)

**Conclusions and Implications.** In conclusion, elderly and young women have different perceptions of the clothing image traits. Although this can be explained with the individual's preference, commonality of fashion seems exist among them in their aging society. Further research might be necessary for designers to understand the perspective view from the elderly population and develop generational marketing in the fashion industry.

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